

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
Writing Curricular Calendar, Kindergarten, 2012-2013
Unit Three - Writing True Stories

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Unit Three – Writing True Stories

November/December

Overview

In the last unit you taught children to look closely and use their observations to help them write books that teach about a topic. In this unit you will teach them to tell true stories from their lives, specifically stories about something that happened to them at one time and in one place. This unit will also call on children to make writing that is easy to read. In short, this unit teaches children strategies for making clearer, richer stories and helps them strengthen the conventions and mechanics of their writing.

This unit is closely aligned with the forthcoming book, *True Stories* (Heinemann, 2013), a revision of *Writing for Readers* from the series, *Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum*. The revised book, along with this write-up, reflect the Project's latest thinking about kindergarten writing, and have also been designed to address the new rigorous standards laid out by the Common Core, as well as Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels.

Specifically, this unit is aligned with the Common Core State Standards for Writing, which channel kindergartners to "use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened" (W K.3), and with the Common Core State Standards for Language, which expect students to "demonstrate a command of standard English grammar and usage when speaking or writing," as well as "capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing" (L K.1, K.2). You might also look to the RWP's *Narrative Writing Continuum* (located on our website, www.readingandwritingproject.com) to assess student progress and support students in meeting the standards. We expect students to be writing at a Level K by the end of kindergarten, so you can use this benchmark to help set goals for their narrative writing across the year.

We have changed the main focus of this unit from small moment writing to true story writing because we have found that while some kindergarten children are ready to write more tightly focused stories, other children are not. So, for now, a child might write, "I rode my bike. I got ice cream. I played." And you will want to embrace that as a terrific go at a true story. Our goal is that kindergarten teachers use their teaching time on lessons that will have big payoff for their writers. We have thus filled this revised unit with lessons that are designed to meet your children as personal narrative writers, wherever they may be—and then to grow their skills.

For now, the important thing is for children to become accustomed to thinking of a story, capturing it in drawings and words that span pages in ways that they, and others, can read and recreate. That's huge! It's amazing for kindergartners to stretch out words, record initial and final

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sounds, reread their own writing, and add more to the page, expanding on their own creations. Essentially, then, we're suggesting that most of you take the Small Moment unit and teach it twice. This first time, you will care very much that your children will tell and "write" stories that sound like stories, and you'll care that each child's spellings go through dramatic transformation toward becoming more filled-out. Of course, if your kindergartners are highly proficient, you may decide to combine RWP's January unit with this one, granting yourself the space for an additional unit of study.

The Common Core State Standards call for kindergartners to "write a letter or letters for most consonant and short-vowel sounds" and to "spell simple words phonetically, drawing on knowledge of sound-letter relationships" (L K.2 c,d). One big goal of the unit, then, as in the first unit, is to help children learn to sound out words, stretching them out so they can isolate and hear the sounds at the start of a word and make a mark to represent that sound. You'll teach children that they can listen to the sound, think, "What letter makes that sound?" and try out different letters, relying on what they know about letter names and sounds to make a match. They can then reread what they have written—the initial sound—and try to hear another sound, continuing in that fashion. Your expectation will be that many children will write using initial and final consonant sounds, relying on letter names when they do not know the sounds a letter makes.

As children return to writing, day after day, you will want to instruct them in ways that amp up the level of what they do. In early October, a child might sound out "somersault" by saying the word just like that: "somersault." As you listen you may think, "She is not ready to write 'somersault.'" You will be right. But then it is up to you to teach that child how to do so! Teach her how to stretch out the word, hearing the distinct phonemes or sounds in it and then isolating the initial sound. If another child records a first letter for a word only, then you know that with just a bit of instruction, that child can begin to hear final sounds as well. Your expectation should be that as children spend day after day drawing and writing, you will directly teach into what they do. You'll teach individually through conferring, and you'll teach in small groups, and you will ask children to work differently after you have taught them. Your teaching will often end with phrases like, "From this day forward, whenever you write, remember to..."

As you look across the work that students do at the start of this unit, and in the middle of the unit, you should see dramatic and obvious improvements in their spelling and their control of the conventions of written language. A child who starts the unit writing left to right, bottom to top, will end the unit writing left to right, top to bottom, and adding punctuation to boot! A child who begins with no letter-sound connection can, within a matter of weeks, be using a dozen letters and sounds. As you support your kindergartners in this work, they will be demonstrating an understanding of the organization and features of print, transferring their knowledge of reading texts to writing texts (CCSS RF K.1).

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As in all writing units, the growth that individual students make will look different. If you have ELLs who are in the first two stages of language acquisition, before children produce English, you will want to tell them what you see on their pages as a way of supporting their language development. You might place your finger on a part of their drawing and observe, "Look at your writing! Is this you?" The child can respond with a "yes" or a "no." Then you can ask, "Are you in the park?" If the child nods, continue your observation and pointing, saying, "I see a tree. I see the sun. Look at all the flowers!" This way, the child will have meaningful language experience between the teacher, the words and her own drawings. Additionally, this process can be a kind of scaffold for students who are reluctant to talk about their writing. Keep in mind that the guidance you offer students will of course look different as you move from one to another during your one-to-one conferring and small-group instruction.

Another big goal in this unit, expanding on the first, will be for your writers to generate true, sequenced, cohesive stories from their lives, and then record these stories across the pages of little booklets. Teach your students to use drawings to help them hold onto meaning and to help them generate the language of their story. Teach them to label several items on each page and that sometimes labels consist of multiple words. Refer to the Spelling and Print Concepts at the end of the unit for more specific information about assessment and instruction in these areas.

You'll want children to be able to reread the books they write, turning the pages from front to back, reading them from left to right, top to bottom. They will continue to work in partnerships, sharing their booklets just as reading workshop partners share their books. Working in partnerships supports kindergartners in having collaborative conversations with multiple exchanges, speaking audibly and expressing their thoughts feelings and ideas clearly (CCSS SL K.1, K.6). In partnerships, you'll want children to read in two ways: telling the story using rich, oral storytelling language, and then reading the print, touching the words as they read them. They can sit hip-to-hip, hold the booklet between them, turn pages (ideally from left to right) and tell the story as they study the pictures and read the writing. They can begin working on one to one matching as they name the things that they see on the page and read the labels under each of those items. By the end of the month, if not before, some of your children will have graduated from writing labels alone to writing a sentence underneath the picture they have drawn on each page. Those sentences will be structured into stories. Unlike the previous RWP unit, children in this unit are all writing one kind of writing—personal narratives.

Assessment

This is the second unit in which kindergartners write personal narratives. During the second half of the first unit of study this year, students wrote their own stories. Now, a few months later, kindergarten students will again write true stories. You can use your summative assessments from the past two units to determine the teaching direction for this unit. Then, at the end of the unit, you can conduct another summative assessment. Here you will want to get your students to write one last true story. As you study these "on-demand" writing pieces ask yourself two

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questions. First, "What do my students know about writing high quality stories?" And second, "What do my kids know about conventions (spelling, spaces, punctuation, etc.)?" We suggest you use the RWP's *Narrative Writing Continuum* (http://readingandwritingproject.com/public/themes/rwproject/resources/assessments/writing/narrative_writing_continuum.pdf) to assess the writing your kids produce. To take a more careful look at conventions, you may want to use Donald Bear's Spelling Inventory to analyze the features of phonics your kids know and are using, as well as to determine which they still need to learn. Be sure to make note of the word features that your kindergarten students are using and confusing. Research says that the features your kids use inconsistently are most worth your teaching effort because those are the ones your kids are most ready to learn.

As you confer, remember to gather data that will inform your teaching of the whole class, small groups and individuals. Use your conferring notes to record and recall this data during the unit. Be careful not to ask your kindergartners tons of questions about their writing process. Instead of asking them to talk all about their process, angle your work towards helping them actually *do* the work they need to do and to understand *why*. You will also want to establish some sort of routine for looking through every child's writing folder at least once every week. As you do this, it is helpful to again choose a lens, a way of looking at the work. Both your conferring notes and your observations of children's folders can serve as formative assessment to guide your teaching decisions.

Preparing for the Unit – Storytelling and Story Reading

Some children will come to school with a strong background in storytelling, while others will have close to none. Literacy scholar Shirley Brice Heath says the most important thing an adult can do to support a child's literacy is to immerse the child in a culture of storytelling. Parents are naturals at scaffolding children to re-create events. For instance, a child and her dad return from the park, and the mother says, "What did you do at the park?" The child says, "I swung," and the mother replies, "Did you?! Did Daddy push you on the swings?" The child nods and says, "Daddy pushed me and I go high, I touched the tree." The mother nods, and retells the story. "Wow. Daddy pushed you on the swing! You went so high that you touched the leaves of the tree." This re-creation of the story is essential to learning how a sentence in standard English should go, and it supports the Language Standards of the Common Core, which expect kindergartners to begin using standard English grammar when writing or speaking (K.1). This oral storytelling not only pushes kids toward such command of grammar when speaking, it also supports their ability to write stories in a clear and cohesive way.

The Common Core State Standards in Writing expect kindergartners to use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to narrate a single event (K.3). Because children need to learn to talk a genre before they can write a genre, you will want to find ways to get children to tell each other stories from their lives. As part of this, we at the RWP suggest you help them recall events the class has experienced together and then spin those events into stories (oral accounts). The

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events can be small ones, for example, about the little inchworm that crawled across the page of the book during shared reading, or the fire drill, during which the whole class went outside with the rest of the school. Say, "I love to think back and remember special moments like that, don't you? Let's all do that together. What happened first? Who can get us started by telling us just the first thing that happened? Then what? Who can tell us what happened next?" That is, you will show your little writers that people take the events of our lives and shape those into stories. On one day, you might teach students that you can zoom in on the important parts of what happened and tell the story of just that event. On another day, you might show students that you actually wrote the story you'd told the previous day onto paper, and that now you, like the children, can reread your own story. In this manner, you will create a few stories that the class knows well, and you will refer to those mentor texts often when children write. You might, for example, refer to one such text in order to point out that writers put periods at the end of a sentence, and you might also refer to it to point out that you told what happened first, then next and next, suggesting children do likewise. Of course, the important thing is not that you are telling and writing stories, but that the children are doing so—and doing so at a great clip.

Another way to practice this rich storytelling work is to have children bring in objects from home that hold meaning and to then tell the stories of those items. You might think of this as show-and-tell, and it is not altogether different—just imagine twenty-five children all showing and telling simultaneously, each to his or her partner! Some teachers have found it helpful and fun to have separate storytelling time. If children storytell at the start of the day or after recess, becoming accustomed to spinning the events of their lives into sequential tales, then during writing workshop it will be especially easy for them to think of stories they can capture on the page. On some days, you will set children up to storytell to a partner at the start of writing time, using this as an early form of rehearsal for narrative writing. Eventually, writers will be able to do this out-loud storytelling by themselves in whisper voices or in their heads.

In order for children to write stories, they'll need to hear stories read aloud. A deep immersion in the sounds of stories will help children as they now try to write the episodes of their lives as stories. Remind them that what they are doing during writing time is writing stories just like those they are reading during reading time. The only difference is that their stories, for now, are true ones. It will help if you read some stories that resemble the personal narratives your children will be writing. *Shortcuts* by Donald Crews, *A Day with Daddy* by Nikki Grimes and *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats are all personal narratives that could serve as mentor texts, but be sure to use some of your personal favorites as well. Ideally, outside the writing workshop, throughout the school day, you will have found many opportunities to read and reread stories to children. If you are following the RWP curricular calendar for reading, for example, your students will be coming to know some stories so well that they can approximate reading these, turning the pages of a story like *Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina (This story is considerably too hard for most kindergartners to actually read, but because they know the book well, they'll be able to storytell it in ways that are congruent with the pages).

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During reading workshop, give children opportunities to hear you read a small stack of stories repeatedly. Then during “independent reading” give children opportunities to touch the pages of those familiar books, saying aloud the words that belong on each page as they re-create a beloved story. If children are doing this during reading, you will definitely want to teach them that after they draw pictures to capture their own narratives, they can then touch each of the pages of their books, saying aloud the words that will eventually go on each page, one after another. In this way, the RWP reading and writing workshops will have alignment—and children’s skills in both will grow.

Bend One – Writing Stories That People Can Really Read

On the first day of this unit, you will let your kindergarten writers in on the fact that sometimes they make writing that is difficult to read. Then immediately follow this revelation by telling them that you can teach them how to make their writing more readable. It is crucial that you communicate how ready you know they are to take on this very grownup kind of work. Ask your students to divide their writing into two piles—writing that is easy to read and writing that is harder to read. Then, as a class, begin to construct a list of features that make writing easy to read. This continues the work of supporting your kindergartners’ mastery of using standard conventions, including grammar, capitalization, punctuation and spelling to help them make their writing more readable (CCSS L K.1, K.2).

On the very first day, get your children writing new true stories from their lives. Students will draw, write and dictate to narrate a single event, or linked events, in order to develop a story across multiple pages (CCSS W K.3). You might introduce this work during a mid-workshop teaching point. On the very next day, you could then model the steps for writing a true story that you taught during the first unit. Remind children to think of something that happened to them or something that they did. Then will show them how you practice telling the story out loud, and how you plan the whole story by drawing pictures across all three pages, paying attention to who, where and what happened in the story. Finally, write the words that tell your story. Because children wrote true stories from their lives in the first RWP unit, you can pull out the anchor chart you created then to support their independent story writing work in this unit.

Remember that repeated practice of the writing process is crucial for beginning writers. Expect that your writers will be able to draw and write a story a day, approximately. These stories should all contain writing on every page—although for many children, the writing will be labels of items in the drawing, and sometimes children will use letter-like graphics rather than actual letters. This may differ from when your children first wrote stories; you probably gave them single sheets of paper on which to write. Now you’ll want to pre-staple books (including some with blank pages and some with a line or two on each page), and put these out in trays at a “writing center” (perhaps on a shelf of supplies). For children who are just developing letter-sound correspondence, the pages will contain a box for a drawing and a line on the top for the

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author's name. You'll move any children who are labeling with initial and final letters toward writing their stories in sentences. In order to encourage this, you'll graduate these children to booklets containing pages that each have a line or two under the space for drawing. (Some teachers elect to provide paper containing a line at the bottom of each page from the beginning of the year, letting this paper serve as an invitation for children to approximate writing, recording strings of letters.) After a child collects a blank book from the tray, he or she touches each page, saying aloud the words that will accompany that page.

You will need to decide whether you want to encourage children to draw in detail or sketch quickly in order to progress toward writing. Think about how much your students know about the writing of words as you make this decision. If your kids can write many labels and even a sentence, then you might decide to shift them toward sketching and away from drawing, so that they can put more of their storytelling effort into the writing of words. On the other hand, if your kids are mostly labeling and writing random strings of letters, you might opt to spend more time teaching them to draw pictures that tell stories, while you feverishly teach them more and more about letters and words. Most kindergarten teachers at first encourage children to work on their drawings and eventually encourage them to focus more on their written stories. Teaching kids to draw their stories helps them make symbols, in this case pictures, that will hold on to what happened in the story and also helps them generate the language of their story. Drawings can become the means for children to write stories that are meaningful and filled with rich language while they are still learning about letters and words.

In order to make more meaningful drawings you can teach children several strategies, such as drawing side view or front view or back view, including setting and objects in pictures, and drawing action and movement. This may feel a little like art class to you and not writing workshop, but keep in mind that representational drawings support children in making meaning and generating story language. Representational pictures also help children read and remember their stories across time.

Of course, all of this information will later need to be included in the written text. Children will first write just the bare-bones of what they did. "I went to grandma's house. I played." Then you will encourage them to add the setting. "I played in her backyard." Later, they can include details, "I played ball." They can go on to include their responses to what they did, or their feelings. "It was a great day. I had fun."

As a way of supporting students in true story writing, you might use partnerships to rehearse and storytell, listening to each other *before* they write. This partnership work develops students' ability to express their thoughts and ideas clearly to others, which support Speaking and Listening Standard K.6 of the Common Core. Certainly kids will be doing this on their own as well but at the start this is a good way for partners to work through different parts of the process. Teach your writers to listen closely to each other as they share their stories so that they are able

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to notice if a story makes sense. The Common Core also expects kindergartners to respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to their writing (W K.5). You can utilize partnerships to support this work, too, giving students the opportunity to work collaboratively, helping each other add more important details to their stories.

Once your kids are using the writing process to write more readable true stories you will teach specific ways to make their writing more conventional. In order to know what to teach them next, we at the RWP suggest paying close attention to the drawings and the language they are using. This bend ends with lessons on sentence writing and the power and importance of rereading. While some of your writers will not be ready to write sentences and will still be applying their growing word knowledge to one- and two-word labels, some of your kids will be ready to write in groups of words, or sentences. Teach your kids that groups of words are written with a capital letter to start and punctuation to signal the end of the sentence.

Before moving to the second bend, plan to give a minilesson that teaches writers to reread their writing. When you teach this lesson, point out how writers can reread in so many ways—writers reread a word, a group of words, a page or many pages to make sure that what they put on the page matches what they want it to say. Think about all of the ways you can make rereading happen in your workshop; for instance, you might designate several mid-workshop teaching times or share times in a week for this skill. In a unit that is largely about making writing that is easier to read, rereading is absolutely essential. It is also one of the most important skills and habits for your beginning kindergarten writers.

You may want to end this first bend with a tiny celebration of the work your writers have done to make stories that are easier to read. Perhaps this celebration is as simple as writers sharing their hardest to read and their easiest to read stories with a partner. Guide them in noticing and naming how the two pieces are different.

Bend Two – Tools Give Writers Extra Power

Because this RWP unit has the dual purpose of teaching your kindergarten writers ways to tell stronger personal narratives *and* ways to make their stories easier to read, this second part of the unit is about using tools to help with both kinds of work. Imagine that some of these tools will hang on the walls of your room and/or will be kept on the inside of the kids' writing folders.

You will want your kindergartners to have and know how to use many different kinds of tools to support their attempts at making readable true stories. One such tool is the anchor chart which you will be adding to throughout the unit as you do more and more teaching. Demonstrate how to use that chart during writing time to lift the level of the stories you make. Be sure to pretend you are one of your kids and show your students that you really need to use what you have learned in a new piece (or an old piece) of writing. Try to break the work into manageable, replicable steps for a five-year-old. When kids recall and understand the process surrounding

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strategies and attempt to apply those strategies in a new situation, they are working at Level 3 in Webb's Depth of Knowledge.

Once children know how to use the anchor chart as a tool to improve their writing, continue to add story-improving strategies to that chart. Most of the lessons in these first two bends of the unit support students in meeting Language Standards K.1 and K.2 of the Common Core, specifically in using standard English conventions in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Because vowels are such an important part of becoming a strong word writer, you may want to teach a lesson that spotlights their use. Be sure to pack the lesson with several concepts and tips about vowel use to support many different kinds of spellers. For instance, teach your kids that every word needs a vowel, and that, actually, each **part** of a word has at least one vowel. You can use your alphabet chart or better yet, a vowel chart to help your kids listen for and feel the vowels in their words as they stretch them out.

You will also do some teaching about the very important concept of high frequency words. While your kindergarten writers have learned to write most of their words by stretching them out, they also need to learn how to write some words in a snap. In many classrooms, these most frequently occurring words are called "word wall" words because they are taught directly to the students and then put onto the word wall. Again, you can show your students how to use a personal word wall as a tool to help them remember which words to spell automatically. Once your kids understand the power of a personal word wall, be sure that they do not *only* use word wall words. Perhaps you will do a lesson on writing with your own words, in which you demonstrate how specific nouns and verbs can help them write with their own voice. The Common Core Standards expect kids to pay attention to nouns and verbs in their writing and speaking (L K.1b).

You might also teach your kids how to work with a partner to help them hear more sounds in words they are stretching. Support students in spelling words phonetically, drawing on all they know about sound-letter relationships (CCSS L K.2d). When kindergartners work together to write words, their tendency is often to just tell each other how to spell words, so be sure to teach them ways they can help each other instead of giving away the answer. For example, you might teach a lesson on how partners can help each other get more letters into each word by repeating the stretching process multiple times.

Before the third bend of the unit begins, we at the RWP suggest you do a guided inquiry lesson in which you get kids using all of the tools and strategies they have learned so far in the unit. In this lesson, you will again do more sophisticated intellectual work with your kids as they try to apply their learning to the task of making their whole folder of stories more readable. You might invite each of your kids to open their folder as they sit on the rug during your whole class teaching time. Then guide them through rereading every story they have written so far in the unit first. Next, use the anchor chart to help kids notice and name what work they have done in their

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stories and what work they still might do. The inquiry work kids do on the rug can set up the work they will do during writing time. Some writers might be working to get more vowels in words or to write groups of words correctly, while other are working to complete stories. Still, other children will be trying to write new true stories from their lives, using everything they have learned so far.

Bend Three – Making True Stories More Fun and Readable

In the third bend of this unit, you will switch your focus a little from making writing that is easier to read, to making writing that is easier to understand and love! While this bend is devoted more to making stronger personal narratives, you will continue to teach kids to make their writing more readable. You can do this teaching during small groups, conferences, mid-workshop teaching and shares.

The Common Core State Standards in Writing state that kindergarten writers should be able to “respond to questions and suggestions from peers and add details to strengthen writing,” which will support revision work (K.5). You will invite kids to try out revision strategies on their old pieces of writing. However, you will also urge kids to try the narrative-improving strategies on new pieces. You might begin this bend by teaching your writers how to search the pictures they have drawn to help them plan, talk and remember their stories, and then write more words to tell a clearer story. Show your students how you can place your finger on the pictures and search for things you have not yet said. This work of slowly moving your finger over the page involves checking what was drawn against the memory of what actually happened. Earlier in this RWP unit, you taught your children how to talk their story as they drew it, now you are teaching your writers how to search the picture and talk in order to get more of the whole story you told.

As a part of this work, you'll teach kids to reflect on their writing by asking, “How do I know that I am done?” They can look at how many words they have on the page, especially if they are labeling. Teach them to ask themselves, “Have I labeled enough?” or “Do the most important things have a label?” A great visual way of teaching writers to self-reflect is to show them how to compare their piece with the class exemplar or even your mentor piece. You might show writers who are ready for this strategy, how to put their piece side-by-side the class exemplar and ask themselves, “What’s in this piece that I can put in my piece?” You'll want to make sure that writers don't copy the content of the exemplar, but instead use the parts that are noted (pictures, labels, multiple sentences, etc.) to determine what to add. As writers do this kind of comparison work, they might say things like, “Our class piece has two sentences on a page. I think I want to do that too!” Or “In the class story all of the pages have labels. I can do that in my pictures!”

Once your writers have more words to add to their stories, you might want to teach them how to use flaps. Flaps are pieces of paper that kids can tape or staple to their booklets. These help turn revision into a construction process, a making process, and kids love to make stuff! We want kids to love revision. Because the flaps can be fun for your students, you will find that they will

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want to add flaps often, so be sure to show your writers that we use flaps for a purpose. You have already taught your kindergartners many strategies for writing quality personal narratives and you can use apply these strategies to the flaps. You can demonstrate how you could use flaps to say more about who was in the story or what happened. You might put dialogue on the flap, or add the setting or the feelings in the story.

Because beginnings and a sense of when a story happened are both so important to drawing readers in, you may want to teach your writers how to begin their stories with place and time. As your writers become more proficient at constructing beginnings of stories, expand their understanding of place and time. Try out several different beginnings for a story they already know well, like one of your class mentor pieces. Teach them to be specific. Instead of, "I was in the park," show your writers how you get more specific by thinking, "*Exactly* where?" You might then change your beginning to, "I was on the Great Lawn." Kids can also begin with when, asking themselves, "*Exactly* when?" Perhaps they'll tell the time of day, time of week or time of year. Writers can apply all of these strategies for making a strong *beginning* to the rest of their story—on pages two and three.

During this bend, teach children to talk about the stories they have written with their partners, looking for places that they might add to their writing. You might even make the connection to reading workshop, telling writers that just as they are talking about books in reading workshop, they can talk about their booklets in writing workshop. For example, if, during reading time, you teach kids to look at a book cover and think about what the book may be about, they can do the same when they read a partner's booklet during writing time. If, during reading, children name parts of books they think are important and/or act out what their characters do and say, they can do the same as they read each other's booklets. This will lead them to see how they can add more details into their writing. Point out that in the books they are reading, the characters actually talk. The wolf calls out, "Little pig, little pig, let me in!" There may be people in children's stories who also talk; students could include their characters' actual words in the story. Presto: children will need speech bubbles! Similarly, you can encourage children to make some parts of their stories really exciting by telling more details about what happened.

As you confer with partners, ask them to notice what's already on their page. Say, "Let's look at this page. You have lots of pictures but no words. Maybe you can add labels." Or, "You have a picture but there is lots of empty space around it. Could you add more so we know more about your story?" Or, "Can you show where you are in all of your pages?" When you teach students to ask each other, "What is this?" or "What else can you say here?" you are teaching partners to help each other clarify their writing. Teaching kids to clarify their thoughts and ideas is highlighted throughout the speaking and listening portion of the Common Core State Standards as well; spending time on this skill will help you meet those (K.1-K.3). Of course, you won't necessarily expect partnerships to be able to make such suggestions without some concrete tools. Scaffold this talk by displaying partner talk charts and/or small tabletop tools that provide visuals

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(maybe two faces with speech bubbles) and some key words or symbols making the tool user-friendly for kindergartners.

Bend Four – Getting Ready for Publication: Revise, Edit, and Publish

End your unit by having children look back through their collection of stories, choosing one to make even better, taking it through the writing process. Remind children that writers always look for ways to improve their writing before sharing it with others. Remind them of the revision work they learned to do in the first unit and perhaps add on to this—they could reread a piece to add forgotten details or write more labels.

You might also add something to children's strategies for making stronger narrative writing. You could teach them about one powerful way to end a true story, for example: telling feelings about that memory. Share examples of this from real books and your own mentor text. You might spotlight a child's work, too. A child who has written "Mom put a Band-Aid on my knee, and then we went home," can instead write, "Mom put a Band-Aid on my knee. She gave me a kiss, and I felt much better."

Because this RWP unit is also about making easier to read stories, you will want to make editing a big deal before your kids publish their writing. Get your kids using all of the tools and strategies they have learned about conventions and mechanics to make writing that was easy for them and for others to read. You will not want to miss the opportunity to hammer home for your kids that the reason for conventions is so we can share our writing with readers. Editing becomes more urgent because they will be sharing at the celebration.

Have your children spend a day or so fancying up their work with color and a cover. Then once they have spent some time practicing both reading their stories and talking about what they have done to make their personal narratives easier to read, choose a way to celebrate their hard work. You might want to have a more process-oriented celebration. Your kids can talk through what they learned and what they did to make their celebration piece. Show your writers how to point to the actual parts they edited and revised. This kind of celebration can do double-duty, serving as both an end to your unit and a summative assessment of your teaching.

Spelling and Print Concepts

At this point in the year your students have learned more concepts of print, developed stronger alphabet knowledge including recognizing and naming uppercase and lowercase letters and forming letters, learned many of the letter sounds, and are developing the ability to hear and manipulate sounds. They have a few words they "just know" or at least know how to locate on the word wall. As your word study, interactive writing, and shared reading sessions build on this knowledge make sure that your writing instruction connects to this work so that students apply what they know from these contexts to their own writing. Do this through demonstrations in your

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minilessons, conferences, or small groups, and also by providing students with tools that can help them transfer what they are learning.

Early Print Concepts, Alphabet Knowledge, and Letter-Sound Correspondence

The work you do around print concepts and letter-sound correspondence will propel your kindergartners towards meeting the Foundational Skills and Language Standards outlined in the Common Core. You are probably finding that your students now have more understanding of print in this unit. They will know that words are different from and match pictures and that words are written left to right (RF K.1). Begin his work with two-word labeling, showing students how you can write two words when labeling part of the picture and that before you write the words you tap with your eraser side of the pencil where those words will go. The same works for writing sentences on the lines, once students are able to write words with initial and final sounds (as it is easier for them to space words that are represented by two letters, not just one). As students move into writing two-word labels and sentences, teach the difference between a word and letter, and use that language throughout all of your literacy instruction. Some students also benefit from drawing lines for the words they will write. Interactive writing is a collaborative writing experience that can support students as they learn to create and write sentences, and it can be done with the whole class outside of writing workshop or in a small group during writing workshop (L K.1).

Your instruction around letters and sounds has probably moved to more challenging letters that many students are still confusing. As you move forward with this work, we at the RWP suggest you make sure students are transferring this knowledge to their writing, using these letters to label or write words on the lines. Even though some may only be recording initial sounds, you'll expect that the sounds they have learned during word study are being used correctly. An individualized alphabet chart is a helpful tool for kindergartners at this time of year as it reminds them of what they have learned in previous RWP units. It is important that they have a small version of the whole-class chart so they can find letters and picture cues quickly. Also, having known letters highlighted is helpful for students and for you as you confer with students, so you know which letters you expect students to use correctly and which they are still approximating or do not yet know. Remember, too, that the alphabet chart is important because even if students do not know their letters and sounds, they can use the pictures to help them determine which letter to write on the page.

Phonological Awareness

Your students are better able to hear, identify, match, and manipulate sounds because of your work during word study and shared reading with rhyming and counting syllables. Along with their knowledge of letters and sounds, they have begun to connect sound to print, writing letters for sounds they hear in words. At this point your instruction will become more focused on phonemic awareness; this includes work around phoneme isolation (CCSS RF K.2) where children learn to hear sounds in specific positions (first sound, last sound, middle sound) and

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around phoneme identity, where they learn to identify sounds that are the same. These aspects of phonemic awareness are important. When you notice students having a difficult time hearing all the sounds in words and recording a letter for each sound (segmentation), it likely indicates they need more work with the earlier levels of phonemic awareness. As they learn to isolate the first sound and then the last sound, they will be able to problem-solve words more independently, recording a letter for each sound they hear. When they learn to identify words that have the same sound, they are able to use that connection to help with spelling even when they do not know all of their letters and sounds. For example, if a child knows the alphabet chart well, meaning that he knows the picture cues, and he wants to write the word "ball," he doesn't need to know that the /b/ sound is written with a 'b.' He can use his phonemic knowledge, identify that ball and bat (the picture clue on the alphabet chart) have the same beginning sound, and then write the letter 'b' on his paper. The name chart can be used in the same way.

Teach your students to say words and to listen for sounds without your help. Be careful not to isolate sounds for them. Instead, have them say the word and prompt them to listen for the first sound. If they have difficulty with this, practice with them, but remember to release responsibility to them even in a short conference so that they have the confidence to do this work on their own. If they learn to say the word, slide their finger where the letters will go, listen for the first sound, write it, and then repeat these steps, they'll begin to write more labels and more words on the lines. They just need many opportunities to practice! Interactive writing (outside of writing workshop) and small group interactive writing (during writing workshop) are great ways to support writers who are working toward doing this spelling independently. In these sessions children can work together on a shared piece (with teacher guidance), isolating sounds, using the alphabet chart, and recording a letter for each sound. Then they can try the work on their own with their own pieces of writing.

High Frequency Words

Your word wall is growing, which means your students' sight vocabulary is growing. You are teaching them to make a visual image of these words in their minds so that they can recognize them with automaticity when reading, and write them quickly when writing. This makes children more efficient, as they do not have to problem-solve every word they want to write. They can refer to the word wall to help them if they've lost that picture of it or need to check that it is right. This is a good time of year to begin giving children personal word walls that provide more individualized support. Some students may need additional words while others may need you to highlight the words they've been practicing.

As you get to know your spellers, you will find some who approach each word as one that needs to be problem-solved sound by sound, even words that are in their sight vocabularies. Others are often afraid to write words they don't know and therefore rely only on words they already know. Show students how to think before writing a word what kind it is—Is it one they have to slow

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down for to problem-solve? Is it one they can speed up for and write quickly? Once you have identified the types of spellers you have in your room, you'll know how to better support them.

Editing

Even at this early age, children should monitor themselves as they write texts, rereading along the way and asking themselves not only, "Does this make sense? Does it sound like a book?," but also, "Does this look right?" They can check to make sure they have all of the sounds recorded in their words, that their word wall words are spelled correctly, and that 'I' is capitalized (CCSS L K.2). While it may be a bit early to introduce individualized editing checklists to some writers, you may want to make a large one for the class that lets students know what the expectations are for the visual aspects of their writing. Then guide them through checking their pieces during a share time and during the publication week. We at the RWP suggest that at some point you begin giving students their own checklists to use, especially for published pieces.

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